

***The Satyr and the Peasant***

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English 126

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A Man had lost his way in a wood one bitter winter's night. As he was roaming about, a Satyr came up to him, and finding that he had lost his way, promised to give him a lodging for the night, and guide him out of the forest in the morning. As he went along to the Satyr's cell, the Man raised both his hands to his mouth and kept on blowing at them. "What do you do that for?" said the Satyr.

"My hands are numb with the cold," said the Man, "and my breath warms them."

After this they arrived at the Satyr's home, and soon the Satyr put a smoking dish of soup before him. But when the Man raised his spoon to his mouth he began blowing upon it. "And what do you do that for?" said the Satyr. "The soup is too hot, and my breath will cool it."

"Out you go," said the Satyr. "I will have nought to do with a man who can blow hot and cold with the same breath."

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A Man and a Satyr once drank together in token of a bond of alliance being formed between them. One very cold wintry day, as they talked, the Man put his fingers to his mouth and blew on them. When the Satyr asked the reason for this, he told him that he did it to warm his hands because they were so cold. Later on in the day they sat down to eat, and the food prepared was quite scalding. The Man raised the hot soup to his mouth and blew on it. When the Satyr again inquired the reason, he said that he did it to cool the broth, which was too hot. "I can no longer consider you as a friend," said the Satyr, "a fellow who with the same breath blows hot and cold."

***Synopsis***

In the first version of the story a satyr helps a human, takes him to his house while cold outside. The human blows on his hands to keep himself hot, to which the satyr inquires reason. He makes a hot meal for the human who blows on it to make it cold, as claimed by him. The satyr kicks him out not wanting anything to do with someone who can both use coldness and heat with his breath.

On the second version the human and satyr are friends. The human as in the first one blows on his hands to keep himself warm. And like in the first time blows on his meal to make it cooler when it is brought to them. The satyr proceeds to end their friendship based on said circumstances.

***Author’s biography***

The Greek fabulist Aesop or Esop (pronounced [/ˈeɪsɒp/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA_for_English) [AY-sop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Pronunciation_respelling_key) or [/ˈiːsəp/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA_for_English) [EE-səp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Pronunciation_respelling_key), [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): Αἴσωπος, Aisōpos) is given the dates c. 620-564. BC and was by tradition born a [slave](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_Ancient_Greece) (δοῦλος). Although known for the [fables ascribed to him](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s_Fables), Aesop's existence remains uncertain, and no writings by him survive. Numerous fables appearing under his name were gathered across the centuries and in many languages in a storytelling tradition that continues to this day. In many of these tales animals speak and have human characteristics.

Scattered details of Aesop's life can be found in ancient sources, including [Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle), [Herodotus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus), and [Plutarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutarch). An ancient literary work called The Aesop Romance tells an episodic, probably highly fictional version of his life, including the traditional description of Aesop as a strikingly ugly slave who by his cleverness acquires freedom and becomes an adviser to kings and city-states. A later tradition (dating from the [Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages)) depicts Aesop as a black Ethiopian. Depictions of Aesop in popular culture over the last 2500 years have included everal works of art and his appearance as a character in numerous books, films, plays, and television programs.

***Literary analysis***

In the short story the Satyr and the peasant, we can recognize it first and foremost as a fable. This genre of literature was the one that made Aesop famous. Fables are often used as children’s stories with an evident or hidden lesson in it. Although adults can greatly benefit from said lessons if careful attention is paid, interest being expressed and diligently recognizing the lesson for what is worth.

Also it can be claimed that this particular piece of literature is also an allegory. Being that allegories are stories in which things and people represent something entirely other – perhaps an idea or a philosophy, containing typically within a moral or lesson ([*www.about.com*](http://www.about.com)). Seeing as there is so much symbolism in the story, we can identify that the use of semiotics is ever present. Taking this into account we can dissect all the symbols appearing in this story.

The satyr represents nature, raw and understanding. Satyrs are described as roguish but faint-hearted folk — subversive and dangerous, yet shy and cowardly. As Dionysiac creatures they are lovers of wine and women, and they are ready for every physical pleasure. They roam to the music of pipes ([auloi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aulos" \o "Aulos)), [cymbals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymbal), [castanets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castanets), and [bagpipes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagpipes), and they love to dance with the [nymphs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymph) (with whom they are obsessed, and whom they often pursue), and have a special form of dance called [sikinnis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikinnis" \o "Sikinnis). Because of their love of wine, they are often represented holding wine cups, and they appear often in the decorations on wine cups.

Humans on the other hand represent the lack of connection with nature. Our society and advanced culture has detached us from the natural world whose language we no longer speak nor understand.

The satyr’s connection to the world can be seen by his surprise to the peasant’s actions. He is apparently unaware of their meaning. We can also infer that neither cold nor heat have any effect on the satyr, being forces of nature to which the satyr belongs. Even though satyrs have qualities that most humans would find excessive, such as alcohol consumption and carnal desires, the satyr does not hide them. Instead they display them proudly and unadulterated. We can then say that by means of this behavior, satyrs are authentic beings in tune with nature and with a deep understanding of their own desires.

The peasant on the other hand is completely affected by his surroundings, needing in the first version of the story to be rescued by the archetypal force of nature. He represents all humans in effect to the story. An even deeper analysis would suggest that the duality of his breath might represent the dual nature of humanity, their tendencies to be and not be at the same time. And so this particular peasant’s attitude and actions represent the human condition. We could say the use of archetypal psychology is at hand here. Humans according to evolutionary psychologists Richard Dawkings (The Selfish Gene) and Geoffrey Miller (The Mating Mind) claim that humans are the only beings that consciously can say something and mean something else entirely. They’re not so much incoherent, but devious. We may possess the same traits as the satyr and even worse ones, but instead we hide them with reasons and words. In truth most humans are inauthentic.

The satyr also represents wisdom, when in fact he recognizes the duality of the peasant’s breath. He also represents assertiveness by declaring he will have nothing to do with the human’s actions which in turn represent hypocrisy. The author doesn’t mention any reaction by the human to the satyr’s expression, so we can assume that the human also represents acceptance by his inaction. Admitting he’s own nature and being unable to do anything about it.

